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Dr M assails 'unhealthy' lobbying

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SEREMBAN, Thurs. - There are people in Umno using Puteri members to lobby for them in their campaigns, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said such party members were using Puteri members as tools with the hope that they could be candidates for the general election.

"I think there are people (in Umno) who are trying to use Puteri members for their campaigns."

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the statement by Puteri Umno chief Azalina Othman Said that Umno leaders were passing on the unhealthy culture of lobbying to younger members.

She was quoted as saying that the leaders were not practising what they preached and were not exemplary.

Speaking after launching five Malay novels by writer and former journalist Sri Diah in Petaling Jaya on Tuesday, Azalina urged her "elder brothers and sisters" in Umno to set good examples to their "younger sisters" in Puteri who would be the ones to continue the Umno struggle.

Azalina was asked to comment on allegations that some Puteri members were lobbying to be candidates for the general election.

She said these groups would always tell the others to do the correct thing but they themselves were not doing the right thing.

It was unfair to accuse Puteri members of such practices, she said.

Dr Mahathir said Azalina made the statement as she wanted to remind movement members not to be influenced or swayed by these people.

"She (Azalina) does not want Puteri members to be used as tools by these people," Dr Mahathir said after attending the wedding reception of Syazrena Abdul Rafei and Azli Azamin Abdullah, both 26, at Bukit Chedang here.

Syazrena is the daughter of Lt-Kol (r) Abdul Rafei Abdul Khatib and Maznah Bahari, a staff in the Prime Minister's Department.

Asked whether action would be taken against the splinter group in Umno, Dr Mahathir said he did not know.

The number of dissatisfied members who were causing disunity simply because they could not get what they wanted from Umno or the Government was not that many, he said.

On Sunday, Dr Mahathir told a Press conference after joining about 40,000 party leaders, members and supporters to celebrate Umno's 57th anniversary at Merdeka Stadium that there was a splinter group made up of frustrated members who criticised division heads and supreme council members because they were not selected as candidates in general elections or not given government posts.